



Department of Energy  
Washington, DC 20585

#34

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May 2, 1990

Dr. Frank Press  
Chairman  
National Research Council  
2101 Constitution Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20418

Dear Dr. Press:

In testimony last November before a subcommittee of the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Defense Programs expressed the Secretary's desire to have an objective, outside review of the Department's past work regarding the habitability of Rongelap Island in the Marshall Islands.

In 1954, the United States conducted an atmospheric nuclear weapon test at Bikini atoll. After 2 days, when it became apparent that the winds had deposited radioactive contamination from the blast directly onto Rongelap and exposed the population, they were evacuated. The people returned to the atoll in 1957.

Since then, the Department of Energy (DOE) and its predecessor agencies have conducted extensive studies on Rongelap, and other Northern Marshall Islands, to monitor radiological conditions and the health of the exposed people. However, the people of Rongelap had been concerned for their safety and in 1985 they evacuated the island.

In 1986, Congress enacted the Compact of Free Association, Public Law 99-239. Section 103(i) of this law provided for a review of the data collected by DOE and was intended to determine whether the data supports the Department's conclusion as to the habitability of Rongelap Island. Although this review, conducted independent of the DOE, resulted in a conclusion that our data supported the habitability of Rongelap, the people of Rongelap remain unconvinced and have not returned to their land.

In order to obtain an additional independent analysis of this question, I request that the National Academy of Sciences conduct a further review. More specifically, I would appreciate it if you would review all available data regarding radiological conditions

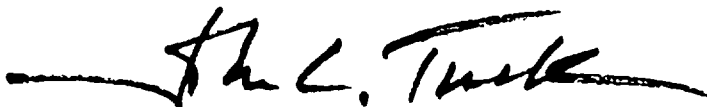
*Harry Brown NV*

on Rongelap, that you consider the views of the people of Rongelap, the views of the DOE, and the views of those involved in the review conducted pursuant to Public Law 99-239. Finally, given the nature of this issue, and in order to assure impartiality and thus gain the acceptance of your conclusions by the people of Rongelap, I request that the members of your review panel be selected with appropriate consideration for this latter point.

Should you require further information on our Marshall Islands program leading to a proposal for our consideration, please contact John Rudolph, the Headquarters program manager in our Germantown, Maryland, office. He can be reached on (301) 353-3618.

We thank you in advance for your cooperation in this matter and will appreciate an early response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John C. Tuck", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the left.

John C. Tuck  
Under Secretary